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ABSTRACT

Among the Mexican American Dialects activity's concerns is the linguistic phenomena characterizing what has been termed Local Hispanicized English (LHE) and whether or not LHE has become an institutionalized dialect of American English. In order to answer whether LHE has characteristics distinguishing it from other Hispanicized forms of English spoken elsewhere in the Southwest, data from Mexican American children and adults in other parts of the Southwest must be compared with local data. This document describes 2 sets of data collected in Riverside, California and Harlingen, Texas consisted of 38 hours of recorded conversation of Mexican American subjects during various types of interviews. Comments are directed at the linguistic variety and quality of the materials and the relevance of the materials to present Mexican Dialects activity. (Author/NQ)

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AN ANALYSIS OF TWO SETS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN BILINGUAL DATA

Rosario C. Gingràs

ABSTRACT

This document describes two sets of data collected in Riverside, California and Harlingen, Texas by non Laboratory researchers. The data consist of 38 hours of recorded conversation of Mexican-American subjects during various types of interviews. Comments are directed at the linguistic variety and quality of the materials and the relevancy of the materials to present Laboratory activity.

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AN ANALYSIS OF TWO SETS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN BILINGUAL DATA

One of the concerns of the Mexican-American Dialects activity is with the linguistic phenomena characterizing what Russell (1970) has termed Local Hispanicized English (LHE) and whether or not LHE has become an institutionalized form (dialect) of American English. It is not clear at this time whether LHE is distinct from what one could call Imperfectly Learned English (ILE). In other words, is there a Hispanicized form of English that is relatively stable and that is predictably different from other forms of English?

Apart from determining the existence of an Hispanicized dialect of English, it is important to know whether LHE has characteristics which distinguish it from other Hispanicized forms of English spoken elsewhere in the Southwest. In order to answer the latter question, data from Mexican-American children and adults in other parts of the Southwest must be compared with local data. The comparison should determine in what ways the English spoken in East Los Angeles differs from the English spoken by Mexican-Americans in other areas.

To determine whether LHE is Hispanicized as suggested in TN-2-70-19, the English spoken by Anglo children and adults must be compared with that spoken by Mexican-American children and adults of comparable socioeconomic levels. By factoring out the similarities between LHE and Local Anglo English, the Hispanicized characteristics of LHE can be isolated. By factoring out the similarities that may exist between LHE and other Hispanicized English dialects spoken in the Southwest,

the unique characteristics of Local Hispanicized English can be delimited. Thus, there will be comparisons of the English spoken by three groups: East Los Angeles Mexican-Americans (Population III), other Southwestern Mexican-Americans, and local Anglo-Americans. Figure 1, below, demonstrates the comparison to be made.

L with S

L with A

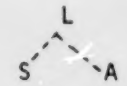

Figure 1

L = Speech of East Los Angeles Population III.

S = Speech of Mexican-Americans in other parts of the Southwest.

A = Speech of Anglo-Americans of similar socioeconomic levels to those in L; located in areas near East Los Angeles.

The L-S comparison will determine what is local in LHE; the L-A comparison will determine what is Hispanicized in LHE.

If suitable data are available, these comparisons may be made without Laboratory data collection outside of Southern California. Data gathered outside of Southern California is necessary only for purposes of delimiting the local characteristics of LHE. All data necessary for the L-A comparison may be collected locally. Comparisons of local and other Hispanicized English dialects will be opportunistically dependent upon whatever existing data become available to the activity from other parts of the Southwest.

The Laboratory recently acquired two sets of bilingual data, collected in Riverside, California and in Southern Texas. While both sets of data have certain limitations, they will prove of utility for purposes of comparison. The two sets of tapes contain a total of 38 hours of data.

The Texas bilingual data consists of 15 dual track monaural 1200 ft. tapes recorded at 3 3/4 i.p.s. The subjects are nine bilingual five-year-old Mexican-Americans from the Harlingen, Texas area. The parents of the children are migrant workers in the Harlingen-San Benito area (Rio Grande Valley).[1] The interviewers are Gustavo Gonzales, Mary Cotes Ley, Joi Kirwin and Ricardo Cornejo. The director of the pilot project from which these tapes were obtained is Professor Joseph Michel. The financial support for the field work came from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, Texas. However, the interviewers, as well as the director, are associated with the Foreign Language Education Center at the University of Texas at Austin. For most of the interviews there are three parts: 1) an interview in English; 2) an interview in Spanish; 3) a dialogue (unstructured conversation between the interviewer and the subject), usually in English. The interview is generally limited to just one child. Only one of the four interviewers does not speak Spanish. The Laboratory has written permission to use these tapes.

The purposes of this Texas Pilot Project were the following:[2]

A. to collect a sample corpus of recorded material representing the speech of five-year-old Spanish-speaking bilingual children of Texas.

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[1]This has been partly assumed. This project is referred to in Gingràs, Technical Note number TN-2-71-03, April 5, 1971, page 6.

[2]The background information on the Pilot Project was found in Ricardo Cornejo, *Bilingualism: Study of the Lexicon of the Five-Year-Old Spanish-speaking Children of Texas*, 1969; page 50 ff.

B. to develop techniques for eliciting speech.

C. to develop pictorial and other types of materials for use in collecting speech.

D. to evaluate different types of interview materials.

E. to start a collection of recorded speech which can be available for possible future studies.

F. to do lexical, phonological, and syntactical analysis of the findings, as well as a study of cultural patterns as shown in the language behavior of the children interviewed.

The interviews are structured, except for the dialogs which are totally unstructured. In the structured part of the interview, the interviewer attempts to elicit certain desired responses. One part of the structured interview was designed to have the child complete a sentence.

The data received to date from Riverside consist of 7 dual track monaural 1800 foot tapes recorded at 7½ i.p.s. The total tape time is approximately 10 hours. The data were originally gathered as part of a dialect survey of California English under the direction of Professor Allen Metcalf, University of California, Riverside, from whom the Laboratory has received permission to use the tapes. Part of the data were collected for a second project concerned with psychological questions (no further information is yet available on this second project). The interviewer, with the exception of two interviews, is Sandra Prasad, a graduate student at UCR who speaks Spanish non-natively but well. There are 27 subjects divided into the following groups:

3	Mexican-American male youths
5	Mexican-American male adults
14	Mexican-American female adults
22	(subtotal)
2	Anglo-American male youths
2	Anglo-American male adults
1	Anglo-American female adult
5	(subtotal)
27	TOTAL

The length of the interview for each subject varies from under five minutes for the interviews with the youths, to about an hour for the interviews with the female adults. The interviews were conducted at various sites: high school cafeterias, elementary school conference rooms, picnic grounds and at subject's homes. The longest interviews (over one hour) were conducted in the homes.

The interviews with the youths consist of reading prepared texts for the purposes of the dialect survey. A short unstructured conversation occurs as prelude to the text readings. The interviews at the elementary schools are with subjects who have children at those schools.

As part of the Riverside project, samples of children's speech (both Anglo and Mexican-American) were also collected. For many of the children whose speech was recorded, their parents' (in general, their mothers') speech was also recorded. Consequently, we will be able to compare the speech of a given child with at least one of his parents. However, the tapes of the children's speech are not yet available.

The Texas data have some limitations. The structured part of the tapes is relatively uninteresting for purposes of the planned

comparisons, since the children's responses tend to be isolated segments of speech. The unstructured part of the interviews can be useful since these are examples of continuous, natural speech.

Although the data from the Texas children have not been analyzed, the immediate impression that one gets from listening to the tapes is that the English of these children seems to differ from Standard English along one major parameter--intonation. The intonational patterns seem to be transferred from Spanish intact. The phonological segments are not strikingly different from what would be expected from an Anglo child speaking a Texas variety of nonstandard English. There are few major differences in the morphology, syntax and lexicon as compared to what an Anglo child speaking nonstandard English might be expected to say at a comparable age. Another characteristic is that there is virtually no "code-switching." The child can switch from one language to the other, but a sentence will be entirely in one of the two languages. This is not to say that these bilingual children do not transfer lexical items from one system to the other. There has been very little attention paid to code-switching by linguists. As noted above, the five-year-old children in the Texas study do not code-switch. Perhaps five-year-old children cannot code-switch within sentences. Until we gather data from bilingual children of various ages in East Los Angeles, we will be limited to only noting this complex phenomena.

The data gathered in Texas cannot be used for direct comparison with the other two sets of data already obtained. The Riverside and the East Los Angeles pilot data have been limited to adults. However,

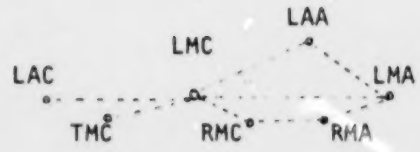
tapes of children's speech from the Riverside project is anticipated. When additional data from East Los Angeles are collected, a three-way comparison of children's speech will be possible.

There are several limitations to the adult Riverside data--limitations that may be circumventable. The two main problems with the adult data are: 1) insufficient socioeconomic information on the subjects; 2) lack of variation in styles. Too little information on the subjects is available to permit assessment of their representativeness. Most of the Mexican-American subjects speak a form of English that is very similar to the type of English spoken by Anglos in that area. Most of the Riverside subjects are native to that area and the English spoken seems to be very different from that in the East Los Angeles pilot data. Until we know whether the communities are different linguistically, or whether the Riverside data are biased toward a certain social class, we will have a difficult time assessing the data. Several of the subjects are active Protestants, which sets them off from the majority of the Mexican-Americans in East Los Angeles. Many of the subjects give the impression of being emotionally detached from the local barrio. Since the activity is interested in that part of the population that is "Barrio-oriented" (see Russell, 1970, page 3), some of the subjects in the Riverside project will have to be excluded from analysis.

The second problem, namely the lack of variation in styles is mostly due to the difference in purposes for which the data were collected. It should be noted that the interviewer did have some of the Mexican-

American adult females code-switch and speak in Spanish. Thus, strictly speaking, some of the subjects did vary their styles, but this was for very short periods of time.

In spite of the limitations noted above, the Riverside adult data will be useful. It is possible to obtain additional socioeconomic information from the interviewer. The lack of stylistic variation should be viewed as a type of constant. Since most of the Riverside adult subjects use an "interview" style, this style will be comparable to "interview" styles already recorded in the East Los Angeles pilot data. Consequently, we will be able to compare Mexican-Americans speaking English of one style in two different areas of California. As we noted above, the speech of the children of adult subjects has already been recorded, and we hope to receive this data soon. Ultimately, we will be in a position to compare the speech of children from the four areas of Riverside, East Los Angeles (Population III), Los Angeles Anglos, and Southern Texas, as well as the speech of children and adults from Riverside and East Los Angeles. We hope also to be able to compare the speech of children with that of their respective parents (Riverside); see Figure 2.



LAA with LMA
LAA with LMC
LMA with LMC
LMA with RMA
LMC with RMC
LMC with LAC
LMC with TMC
RMC with RMA

LAC = Local (Los Angeles) Anglo child speech
LMC = Local (Los Angeles) Mexican-American child speech
LMA = Local (Los Angeles) Mexican-American adult speech
LAA = Local (Los Angeles) Anglo adult speech
RMC = Riverside Mexican-American child speech
RMA = Riverside Mexican-American adult speech
TMC = Texas Mexican-American child speech

Figure 2. Possible Comparisons Among Various Data

A comment on the quality of the recordings should be made. So far, the Texas materials have been heard only on a Sony tape-recorder that has very poor fidelity. This is due to the fact that the Texas materials were recorded at 3 3/4 i.p.s. The equipment the activity uses for linguistic analysis can play tapes only at 7½ i.p.s. Thus it has not been possible to determine if the Texas tapes are of a quality such that we will be able to do refined linguistic analysis. The Riverside tapes vary from rather poor quality to very acceptable quality. Some of the interviews were recorded at such a low level that much distortion occurs in compensation. Because of these mechanical problems, not all of the interviews in the Riverside data would be acceptable for extensive linguistic analysis, ceteris paribus. Both the Texas and the Riverside materials were recorded monaurally. Monaural recordings are fairly acceptable for most linguistic analysis. However, when several subjects are present during an interview it becomes difficult to determine just

who is speaking. Apart from the speaker-identification problem, there is the additional problem that if two subjects speak at the same time, it is very difficult to analyze such "simultaneous" speech. In the East Los Angeles pilot data, the two above problems were circumvented by using stereophonic equipment. Not only were subjects identifiable most of the time, but when simultaneous conversations occurred, it was fairly simple to analyze both conversations. In both the Riverside and the Texas materials simultaneous speech occurs which will have to be discarded since it is too difficult to analyze. Fortunately, such situations are very limited in number in the Riverside and Texas data.

Summarizing the above observations, the Texas and Riverside materials will be of great use. The Texas materials will be useful in determining what are the local characteristics of LHé, at least as such a dialect is spoken by young children. The Riverside materials will be useful for a comparison between children and their parents as well as between adults in two communities, with style held constant. Ultimately, these tapes will contribute to the comparison of the speech of children in three communities, and the speech of adults in two.

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